

Minute of the National Joint Negotiating Committee (NJNC) – Side Table (Support) Meeting – Pay, on Tuesday 10 June 2025 (1000-1200), at Colleges Scotland Offices, Argyll Court, Stirling.

In Attendance	
Collette Bradley	Staff Side
Richard Gordon	“ “
Alison MacLean	“ “
Gary McIntosh	“ “
Laura McLean	“ “
Sue Clyne	Management Side
Susan Elston	“ “ (Chair)
Debbie Kerr	“ “
Jon Vincent	“ “
John Anderson	Management Side Joint Secretary
Janet Stewart	Staff Side Joint Secretary
Jillian Cheape	Secretariat
Louis Martin	Note Taker

33/24 Welcome and Apologies

The Management Side was in the Chair for this meeting. The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Alan Ritchie, Management Side.

34/24 UNISON and Unite Pay Claim

The Management Side thanked UNISON and Unite for submitting its claim on Tuesday 6 May 2025, and reiterated the importance of resolving negotiations swiftly. The claim sought a three-year settlement of 4.5%, 3%, and 3.5%.

The Management Side referred to its previous offer of 4.5%, 3%, and 3%, but noted that following offline discussions a revised offer of 4.25%, 3.25%, and 3% (subject to Scottish Government funding in Year 1 and 2) was now being made. While the claim and the offer appeared numerically close, the overall cost impact of a further 0.5%, due to the workforce size, was considered significant. The Management Side also offered:

- a £1,150 cash underpin for staff earning below £27,000 in Year 1,
- continued support for an increase in the overtime threshold to £44,000, and an increase to the standby allowance of £120 per week,
- a commitment to completing the National Organisational Change Guidance.

UNISON and Unite acknowledged the revised offer and expressed a willingness to move forward, especially in advance of the Scottish Parliament's recess. It confirmed that the offer was being considered in good faith. Additionally, the terms for overtime rates and standby allowances were confirmed.

UNISON and Unite indicated no objection to Year 1, but requested:

- a 0.25% uplift in either year 2 or 3,
- a reopener clause in the event of significant changes in later years,
- a cash underpin in years 2 and 3.

Concerns were raised around compulsory redundancies, with the Staff Side expressing strong opposition. It was noted that even voluntary redundancies can lead to job losses where increased pressure is placed on the remaining staff, particularly when processes are poorly managed. Greater financial transparency from colleges was requested to build trust in any workforce reduction proposals.

The Management Side reiterated that while it was cautious about multi-year deals, the proposed National Organisational Change Guidance, when completed would provide a means for colleges to explore all other alternatives that would avoid compulsory redundancies.

The Staff Side asked whether the implementation of the National Organisational Change Guidance could be linked to the pay deal. The Management Side agreed that reaching a multi-year deal would support long-term planning and engagement.

The GMB noted that its position is distinct from the joint claim by UNISON and Unite. The GMB reiterated that it continues to seek a flat-rate pay increase and a clear, sector-wide commitment to no compulsory redundancies.

The Management Side requested an adjournment to consider the Staff Side view.

Adjournment

Following the adjournment, the Management Side confirmed that the response had been thoroughly considered. However, stated it could not agree to a reopener clause, as that would need to be reciprocal, and nor could it agree to the underpin in Year 2 and 3, citing cost implications, future job evaluations issues and erosion of the pay scales at the lower end of pay scales.

In response to the request for an additional 0.25%, the Management Side stated that it could consider increasing Year 2 from 3.25% to 3.4%, if UNISON and Unite would ballot its members with the revised offer with a recommendation to accept, and if it would agree to a review of Circular 05/18 – Salary Conservation, specifically conservation agreements for individuals offered alternative roles that are more than two grades lower than current grade.

UNISON and Unite requested an adjournment to consider the Management Side response.

Adjournment

UNISON and Unite noted the rejection of the reopener clause, and the cash underpin in Years 2 and 3. However, it expressed disappointment at the Management Side request to review Circular 05/18 on Salary Preservation and made clear that a review of Circular 05/18 would not be accepted as part of this pay claim.

They also requested a completion date for the proposed National Organisational Change Guidance and reiterated its willingness to engage on that matter. It confirmed that it could not guarantee a recommendation to accept the offer without consulting local branches but suggested that an uplift to 3.5% in Year 2 would allow enable it to encourage acceptance of the offer.

The Management Side responded that an uplift from 3.25% to 3.5% in Year 2 would represent an additional £200k+ cost across the sector.

The GMB reiterated its own claim for a flat rate pay increase and a no compulsory redundancies guarantee and requested access to costings relating to the proposed deal. The Staff Side Joint Secretary clarified that UNISON and Unite had not requested or received any costings and therefore could not share such information. The GMB stated that as the deal would apply to its members, it had a right to view the information.

UNISON and Unite noted that if there were an increase to 3.5% in Year 2, this would represent only around £14k per college, while the Management Side reiterated that this was still an unfunded cost and questioned what would be received in return.

UNISON and Unite reminded the Management Side that it had already shifted its position significantly, including moving away from the original £2,000 cash underpin, and noted that its position required a measure of trust.

The Management Side acknowledged that it, too, had moved substantially and expressed disappointment that no recommendation to accept had been secured in exchange for its movement. It noted the Staff Side's position on Circular 05/18.

UNISON and Unite requested a further adjournment.

Adjournment

Following the adjournment, UNISON and Unite advised that it would further consider the Management Side offer and take it to their Stewards. The offer to be considered now standing at:

- Year 1 - 4.25%, with an £1,150 cash underpin for staff earning £27,000 and under,
- Year 2 - 3.4%,
- Year 3 - 3% (all subject to additional Scottish Government funding),
- an increase in the overtime threshold to £44,000,
- an increase to the standby allowance of £120 per week,
- a commitment to completing the National Organisational Change Guidance by 31st December.

However, it stated again that if the Year 2 element were improved to 3.5%, it could guarantee a recommendation to accept the complete offer.

The Management Side confirmed that there could be no further movement and that the cumulative value of the current offer, over the three-year period, at just over 11%, is a very favourable offer. It confirmed it would issue its offer in writing to allow it to be fully considered.

35/24 Date of Next Scheduled Meeting

The date of the next scheduled meeting is still to be confirmed.

Action Monitoring Log – Pay Meetings Only

Thursday 24 April 2025		
Action	Owner	Status/ Anticipated/ Completion Date
Provide written confirmation on the Scottish Government position in relation to the College sector and PSPP.	Management Side Joint Secretary	May 2025
Issue a written version of the revised Support Staff Pay Claim	Staff Side Joint Secretary	Complete
Tuesday 10 June 2025		
Action	Owner	Status/ Anticipated/ Completion Date
Issue the revised offer formally for consideration.	Management Side	Complete
Consider the Management Side's offer and provide a response.	Staff Side	June 2025